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EXHIBITION OF FINE ARTS IN PARIS.

PARIS, October 15, 1855.

MESSRS. EDITORS.—The exhibition of Fine Arts now open in Paris, is the most interesting, as well as the largest, that has ever taken place. Upwards of six thousand works of Art in Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, and Engraving, are gathered together from various countries under the same roof; and one may safely say that, with the exception of those of Russia, every school of modern art has been represented. We cannot but suppose that many a valuable work has been withheld, or that the different countries have been fairly represented; still, there are more than enough to assure us of how it goes with Art in 1855, not in France only, but in the world. A citizen of the United States cannot but deeply regret that his government should have denied those facilities which were necessary to a fair exhibition of our progress in the Fine Arts. If the reader has any acquaintance with Congressional debates, or administrative interests, he will not require an explanation of the difficulties which prevented a modicum of our "surplus" from being devoted to such a purpose—but enough of a disagreeable subject. The arrangements of the exhibition and its general aspect have been frequently described.

As a general thing the lights are good; to secure perfect lights for so large a collection may be considered impossible. Freedom of taste in Art must be conceded by its sincere lover, and charity is an indispensable virtue where so various classes of minds express themselves.

It is not my purpose to write an essay upon the different schools or styles of Art to be found at the Exposition, much less to discuss their relative merits. The same general qualities pervade the best works of all nations; and though the subject and treatment may be widely different, they are sure to find approbation with that wider liker, the human heart. First, then (for myself), I like a work of Art if I like the subject. Secondly, I like it if the subject is well treated. Sometimes a good subject is badly treated, or the reverse. Sometimes parts of a bad subject are magnificently treated, or parts of a fine subject horribly maltreated, so that we stand for a long time, trying to separate and select, until we leave with a feeling of indignation that we have been called upon to do the work that the artist should have done for us. Unity is the great necessity; whatever the work may be, let us have unity, consistency, harmony. Ambition is constantly throwing men out of their spheres. Let him who cannot paint fingers, paint radishes; and let him who cannot paint radishes, paint not at all. But let us go back to the Exhibition, and consider two or three of the works that have the necessary element of *Unity*; works whose various parts are all kept in subordination to the leading idea.

THOMAS COUTURE.

*"Les Romains de la Décadence."**"Nunc patimur longæ pacis mala; sævior armis."**"Luxuria incubuit, victumque ulciscitur orbem."*

This picture, familiar to those who have frequented the Luxembourg galleries, is one

of the most remarkable of the modern French school. It represents a sumptuous hall, where an assemblage of Romans, of both sexes, have abandoned themselves to the pleasures of Bacchus. Feasting has given place to drinking, and the hilarity of some, or languor of others, shows that empty and overturned vases have done their work.

In strong contrast with the scene of revelry below, are placed around severe statues of Romans of the Republic. Cato, Cincinnatus, Brutus, and others, lend their solemn presence. One debauchee, having mounted with difficulty upon a pedestal, is offering a goblet of wine to Brutus; an episode, suggested, perhaps, by Don Giovanni, but none the less appropriate. On the right, holding back in contemptuous disgust, are two young Romans just entering. Their stern expressions tell at once that they appreciate the folly before them. The principal group reclining at the table is admirably composed and full of beauty, and the eye passes from figure to figure, without wandering. The pervading tone of color is gay and brilliant, reminding one of Paul Veronese; and the atmosphere has that clear, soft character which is the gift of the modern French school. Nothing can be more sweetly, pearly and luminous than the flesh, or justly sparkling than the draperies. If I should make criticisms, it would be of a slight looseness of handling, and occasional exaggerations of organization, and an outline sometimes "un pochino troppo ben scritto." It is needless to say that this noble work of Art tells its story perfectly without the aid of a text.

CHARLES LOUIS MULLER.

"Appel des derniers victimes de la Terreur."

Mr. Muller's picture is a powerful memento of the horrors of the reign of Terror. The scene is laid in a large prison, and is represented at the time when the list is being read that is to call the victims of the guillotine. The officer who reads the list is looking up with an insolent expression of enquiry. The jailor, pipe in hand, has accommodated himself upon a bench, and is scrutinizing a noble lady with brutal curiosity. A female figure is prostrate at the feet of the officer who reads the list, and in the various groups around, are read the various shades of anguish, terror, and despair. Here are the aged, the young, the learned, the noble, the refined, the dignified, and the terror-stricken, entangled in the same net, brought together to face death in the same hour. Whatever may have been the spirit that dictated the subject, the effect is to excite deepest compassion for the sufferers, and execration of the tyrants. With great power of chiaroscuro and drawing, this picture is also excellent in color, with a sombreness of tone in harmony with the subject. One in search of faults might find a certain want of compositional coherence, some of the figures being rather isolated; and also a slight opaqueness, unfavorable to atmosphere.

L. BENONVILLE.

"Saint François d'Assise transporté mourant à Sainte-Marie-des-Anges, benit la ville d'Assise."

A dying saint, blessing his native town, furnishes a charming subject for a picture, and most fully has the artist felt it. Reclining upon a litter which has evidently just been placed upon the ground, and sur-

rounded by a solicitous but reverent group of brethren, Saint Francis is extending his hand towards Assisi, which lies stretched out below on the left. The picture is long in proportion to height. The group is seen in shadow, but not too obscurely, against the sky and some rising ground, and Assisi, full of the sweet, quiet character of an ancient Italian town, furnishes a beautiful distance. The figures are largely but carefully drawn, everything is kept in perfect subordination to the subject. St. Francis is supported by one who watches his wasted countenance, as, with declining head, he utters the blessing. A young man upon his knees seems to be repeating the words of his master. Beyond, against the sky, a more aged monk gazes upon Assisi. These, with two young men on the right of the group, who stand with folded arms, and eyes bent upon the ground, form a most interesting group, full of quiet but strong expression. There is nothing in the accessories to distract the attention. The draperies are broadly cast, and the light so distributed and subdued as to respond to the sentiment. In color this picture is not remarkable, and for this the tone furnishes an excuse, if not a reason. It is significant of the appreciation of Art in Paris that this picture is marked as belonging to the Emperor.

No work could afford a stronger contrast to what is called the Pre-Raphaelite school than this work of Benonville. In my humble opinion, it would furnish serious food for reflection to the admirers of that school. It would teach that now, as ever, serious subjects should be largely treated, and that the attention should not be diverted to details, if the feelings are to be appealed to. Subordination is the great law of Art, as well as of Nature, and the moment that balance of parts is lost, unity is destroyed.

In this great exhibition there are so many works of power and beauty, that it is difficult even to enumerate those that are worthy of serious study. C.

HASTE NOT—REST NOT.

FROM, GÖTHE.

Without haste! without rest!
Bind the motto to thy breast!
Bear it with thee as a spell;
Storm or sunshine, guard it well!
Heed not flowers that round thee bloom,
Bear it onward to the tomb!

Haste not!—let no thoughtless deed
Mar for e'er the spirit's speed;
Ponder well and know the right,
Onward, then, with all thy might;
Haste not—years can ne'er atone
For one reckless action done!

Rest not! Life is sweeping by,
Go and Dare before you die;
Something mighty and sublime
Leave behind to conquer time;
Glorious 'tis to live for aye
When these forms have past away.

Haste not—rest not! calmly wait,
Meekly bear the storms of fate;
Duty be thy polar guide—
Do the right, whate'er betide!
Haste not!—rest not!—conflicts past,
God shall crown thy work at last.